



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

*****NEWS RELEASE*****

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Wisconsin programs for homeless students receive national recognition

Three school districts recognized over the past four years

MADISON—State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster announced that the Wisconsin Rapids School District is the only public school district in the nation to receive a program excellence award from the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY).

“Wisconsin Rapids should be proud of its efforts to provide a quality education to all of its students,” said Burmaster. “They join the Kenosha Unified and the Madison Metropolitan school districts in having nationally recognized programs for students experiencing homelessness.”

NAEHCY gives the “Outstanding School-Based Education Program Providing Services to Students in Homeless Situations” award to one public school district across the United States each year. In three of the last four years, a Wisconsin public school district has received the award for program excellence. The Wisconsin Rapids School District won this year for its homeless program that focuses on violence prevention, healthy-relationship development, tutorial assistance, and poverty awareness.

In 2006, the Kenosha Unified School District was recognized for its partnership with the Shalom Center of the Interfaith Network, offering an after-school program to help students experiencing homelessness “catch up” academically with their grade-level peers.

In 2004, the Madison Metropolitan School District was recognized for its Transitional Education Program (TEP) that offers assistance in enrollment, attendance, and academic support for students experiencing homelessness. Students receive direct teacher instructional support to help with academic achievement.

“We have seen an increasing trend in the number of students who experience homelessness, and it is clear that there is a need for programs to help these students stay in school so they can learn in a safe, stable, and encouraging environment,” said Burmaster.

(more)

Since the 2003-04 school year, the U.S. Department of Education has required an annual count of children and youth experiencing homelessness who are enrolled in public school districts. Identification of homeless students has increased by at least 1,000 students each year in Wisconsin public schools since the initiation of this annual count. There were 5,358 students identified in 2003, and currently there are more than 8,000 Wisconsin students who are identified as being homeless.

Each public school district in Wisconsin is required to designate a homeless liaison to identify, immediately enroll, and help homeless children and unaccompanied youth stay in school. Wisconsin homeless liaisons follow legislative requirements to help children and youth in homeless situations continue their education.

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction provides technical assistance and grants to support programs for homeless students throughout the state. Districts in Wisconsin that have received funding include: Appleton Area, Eau Claire Area, Green Bay Area, Janesville, Kenosha, Madison Metropolitan, Middleton-Cross Plains, Milwaukee Public Schools, Platteville, Racine, and Superior.

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NOTE: This news release is available electronically at http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpi2007_136.pdf. Additional information about Education for Homeless Children and Youth is available on the Department of Public Instruction website at <http://dpi.wi.gov/homeless>.